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December 18, 2023

The Honorable Kathleen H. Hicks
Deputy Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hicks,

In December 1940, while we were still at peace, President Franklin D. Roosevelt famously called on the United States to be “the great arsenal of democracy.” He said it was the “purpose of the nation” to build “with all possible speed every machine, every arsenal, every factory that we need to manufacture our defense material.” President Roosevelt’s call did more than provide a lifeline to our allies who were already in battle. It helped arm our own military in advance of and through years of heavy conflict and ultimately win the war.

Today, the United States finds itself needing to rebuild a different kind of arsenal – an arsenal of deterrence. President Xi Jinping has ordered the Chinese military to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027. To prevent war, we must quickly remake an arsenal of deterrence that can arm Taiwan as well as our own forces to allow us to prevail in any conflict in the Indo-Pacific. Our struggles to meet the significant demand for U.S. munitions in Ukraine and now Israel have revealed, however, the fragility of our munitions industrial base.¹

Recent war games simulating a conflict with China over Taiwan show that the United States would run out of long-range, precision-guided munitions (PGMs) in less than *one week*.² Without an adequate supply of long-range PGMs, particularly anti-ship cruise missiles, U.S. and partner forces would need to fight closer to Chinese defensive fires, thereby increasing the risk to air and

¹ See Doug Cameron, *U.S. Struggles to Replenish Munitions Stockpiles as Ukraine War Drags On*, Wall Street Journal (Apr. 29, 2023) available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-push-to-restock-howitzer-shells-rockets-sent-to-ukraine-bogs-down-f604511a>; Oren Liebermann and Natasha Bertrand, *US eyes weapons stockpiles as concern grows about supporting both Ukraine and Israel’s wars*, CNN (Oct. 11, 2023) available at <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/11/politics/us-weapons-stockpiles-ukraine-israel/index.html>.

² Seth G. Jones, *Empty Bins in a Wartime Environment: The Challenge to the U.S. Defense Industrial Base*, Center for Strategic & International Studies (Jan. 23, 2023) available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/empty-bins-wartime-environment-challenge-us-defense-industrial-base>.

naval assets and the servicemembers who will operate them. With no guarantees that a war in the Indo-Pacific would be limited to weeks or even months, the possibility that we may have to fight for an extended period without the most effective assets in our arsenal is deeply alarming. In addition, significant delays in the deliveries of critical missiles to Taiwan, including anti-ship Harpoon missiles, make it unclear whether Taiwan itself will have sufficient weapons to defend itself and repel a Chinese invasion. Rearming Taiwan after hostilities have commenced, as we did with Ukraine, would be significantly more difficult, if not infeasible.

Today's challenges must force us to adapt and think outside the box. If delays are preventing vital weapons from being delivered to Taiwan, we must be creative in putting together capabilities – using weapons and assets already in our inventory – that we can promptly deliver to Taiwan. If cost and production times are limiting our supplies of long-range PGMs, we must look at cheaper alternatives that can be produced quickly, which can complement the more expensive missiles. Two innovative ideas – the “MacGyver” Harpoons and Powered JDAMs – may offer potential solutions to our problems and help strengthen the arsenal of deterrence at this urgent moment.

“MacGyver” Harpoons

In June 2022, Ukrainian forces were able to sink two Russian vessels in the Black Sea using Harpoon missiles. At the time, Ukraine had Harpoon missiles but no land-based Harpoon launching system. With the help of the United States, Ukraine cobbled together a launcher using flatbed trucks, modules, cables, and a power source and to convert a ship-based weapon system to a mobile ground-based one that could be launched from the back of a truck.³ Using this inventive system, Ukraine was able to successfully attack the Russian ships.

In his testimony to the Committee, retired Navy Rear Admiral Mark Montgomery advocated for a similar “MacGyver” approach to speed up deliveries of key weapons systems to Taiwan.⁴ Currently, Taiwan is waiting to receive 400 ground-launched Harpoon missiles and 100 Harpoon launch systems – the sales of which the Pentagon announced over three years ago. Some reports suggest deliveries may not be completed until 2029.⁵ A “MacGyver” solution, using existing components and older Harpoon missiles already in our inventory, may help get much-needed weapons to Taiwan before then and at a significantly lower cost per round.

The United States currently has hundreds of Harpoon missiles that are being considered for demilitarization, destruction, or long-term stowage. Taiwan may be able to use these missiles

³ Howard Altman, *How The U.S. Rushed Harpoon Anti-Ship Missiles To Ukraine*, The War Zone (Sept. 7, 2022) available at <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/how-the-u-s-rushed-harpoon-anti-ship-missiles-to-ukraine>.

⁴ RADM (Ret) Mark Montgomery, “Baker’s Dozen: Thirteen Recommendations to Improve Deterrence in the Western Pacific,” *Congressional Testimony to the Select Committee on China*, Apr. 26, 2023, <https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/04-26-23-CCP-Montgomery-Written-Testimonyv4.pdf>.

⁵ Shivani Tanna, *Taiwan to buy 400 US anti-ship missiles to face China threat*, Reuters (Apr. 17, 2023), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-buy-400-us-anti-ship-missiles-face-china-threat-bloomberg-news-2023-04-17/>

with a land-based launch system with only minor modifications. Missile launch support structures and Harpoon Ship Command-Launch Control Systems could be taken off decommissioned Navy ships. Communications systems and data links could come from existing Taiwanese systems. Power generators and ground platforms, such as steel plates or Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks, could come from either American or Taiwanese stocks.⁶

Put together, the resulting missile system could provide Taiwan with crucial capabilities at a time when delays in the contracting and production of new Harpoon missiles and launchers are raising troubling questions about the schedule of their deliveries. While such a solution cannot replace the actual missiles and launchers Taiwan has purchased and must receive, it could offer an alternative to leaving Taiwan lacking weapons necessary for its defense as it enters the window of maximum danger.

Powered JDAMs

Joint Direct Attack Munitions, or JDAMs, were used extensively by the United States in both Iraq and Afghanistan. As guidance kits for various weapons systems, JDAMs provided precision-guided bombing capability to U.S. and allied forces through years of combat. At its peak, JDAM's manufacturer was able to produce around 45,000 JDAMs a year.⁷

The "Powered" JDAM – an innovative concept that would allow a standard 500-pound bomb to travel several hundred miles as a cruise missile – could provide a cheaper, near-term solution to complement the more expensive PGMs that take years to build. Powered JDAMs may be able to attack targets at both land and sea; reports indicate a maritime strike variant of the Powered JDAM is being actively developed, which could add to our limited yet vital arsenal of anti-ship missiles. And with an expected range of at least 300 nautical miles (over 555 kms), it could serve as a standoff missile that our forces would be able to fire from beyond the range of Chinese defenses.⁸ Currently, the limited U.S. inventory of high-end anti-ship cruise missiles undermines the effectiveness of our deterrence when it comes to Chinese calculations of the probable success of a cross-Strait invasion. The Powered JDAM could potentially change this calculus as it would be tailor-made for the destruction of Chinese flotillas of poorly armed ships ferrying troops and conducting logistical operations across the Taiwan Straits.

To be clear, Powered JDAMs would not be able to replace the advanced anti-ship PGMs. Powered JDAMs do not necessarily have the survivability and range of many of the more advanced

⁶ Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery (ret.), Bradley Bowman, and Ryan Brobst, *How 'MacGyver' magic can get Taiwan its Harpoon defenses faster*, Defense News (Dec. 7, 2022) available at <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2022/12/07/how-macgyver-magic-can-get-taiwan-its-harpoon-defenses-faster/>.

⁷ See Anthony Capaccio, *Boeing Will Build More GPS-Guided Smart Bombs With Extra Pentagon Funding*, Bloomberg (Oct. 6, 2017) available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-10-06/boeing-to-build-more-gps-guided-smart-bombs-under-pentagon-shift#xj4y7vzkg>.

⁸ Joseph Trevithick, *Jet-Powered JDAM Aims To Turn Bombs Into Cruise Missiles*, The War Zone (Oct. 24, 2023) available at <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/jet-powered-jdam-aims-to-turn-bombs-into-cruise-missiles>.

cruise missiles.⁹ Nevertheless, while the exact price of an anti-ship Powered JDAM has not been released, considering the historical cost of a standard JDAM of around \$30,000, it is still likely to be a fraction of the cost of existing cruise missiles, as crucial as they are. Thus, Powered JDAMs could serve as lower-cost supplements that would allow us to tap into our current inventories of 500-pound bombs.

An important lesson from the war in Ukraine is that forces engaged in modern-day conventional warfare will likely burn through vast quantities of munitions. Affordable standoff missiles that can be produced quickly, such as Powered JDAMs, may be able to meaningfully complement our inventory of PGMs and strengthen our ability to succeed in any contingency in the Indo-Pacific.

Reviving and rebuilding an arsenal of deterrence will require a generational investment and mobilization. At the same time, we must be realistic about how quickly the munitions industrial base will be able to produce our most essential weapons. We must be creative and think outside the box to come up with solutions. The urgency of the moment requires nothing less.

To better understand plans you may have to pursue the weapons discussed above, we respectfully request that you provide written responses to the following questions no later than January 8, 2024. To the extent that such information is classified, please supplement written responses with a classified briefing, as appropriate. We recognize and appreciate conversations you have already had with us on some of these issues. We look forward to continuing our dialogue.

1. Have you explored the “MacGyver” Harpoon option discussed above, for assistance to Taiwan?
 - a. How much do you think the option would cost?
 - b. Do you believe the option would be feasible?
 - i. If yes, please explain how many missiles and launchers the United States would be able to deliver to Taiwan using the proposed approach. Please also explain when deliveries could be made.
 - ii. If not, please explain the reason.
2. Have you explored similar options whereby missiles in stockpile can be re-purposed and combined with existing components and parts to be delivered to Taiwan? Please explain.
3. What plans do you have, if any, to acquire Powered JDAMs?

⁹ *Id.*

- a. Do you believe Powered JDAMs could complement long-range PGMs in an Indo-Pacific contingency?
 - b. Do we have sufficient stockpiles of MK-82, MK-83, and MK-84 bombs to allow Powered JDAMs to meaningfully add to the missile inventory allocated for the Indo-Pacific? Please explain.
 - c. If you do not have any plans to acquire Powered JDAMs, please explain why not.
4. Is the Department of Defense exploring purchases of any missiles, similar to Powered JDAMs, that are a) more affordable than long-range PGMs, b) quicker to produce than long-range PGMs, and c) can strengthen our deterrence capabilities in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain.

The House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party has broad authority to “investigate and submit policy recommendations on the status of the Chinese Communist Party’s economic, technological, and security progress and its competition with the United States” under H. Res. 11.

To make arrangements to deliver a response, please contact Select Committee staff at (202) 226-9678.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Mike Gallagher
Chairman
Select Committee on China